

sister, to whom he was then as always, devoted, we know nothing of the women who were at this time of his circle. Vivian Grey's 'devil of a tongue' made him popular with the ladies of his acquaintance, and he in his turn discovered that 'there is no fascination so irresistible to a boy as the smile of a married woman.' The men trembled at Contarini's sarcasms, but 'the women repeated with wonderment his fantastic raillery.' Clever, spirited, and handsome, and with as much assurance and as sharp a tongue as either of his heroes, the young Disraeli no doubt had much the same success.

Meanwhile, as he shed the habits and manners of the scholar, his taste for the profession to which his father had devoted him did not increase. There is a story of a friendly solicitor endeavouring to quicken his flagging interest in the law by installing him for a time in his own office ; but when he found the youth reading Chaucer during business hours he came to the conclusion that nature had not intended him to be a lawyer, and advised that he should be allowed to follow his own inclinations and devote himself to literature.¹ To literature at all events he about this time seriously applied himself. The first attempt of which we have any record is curiously indicative of the trend of his subsequent genius. Encouraged by the kindness of John Murray, he submitted for publication in May, 1824, a short manuscript which under the guise of a tale was intended to be a satire on 'the present state of society.' Of society outside Blooms-bury the youthful satirist can have known nothing, except what he had picked up at Murray's dinner parties or a vivid imagination could teach him; and Murray showed so little eagerness to publish that a month later the author asked him to forget the 'indiscretion' and consign the manuscript to the flames.² A couple of chapters which had been mislaid when the manuscript was first sent to Albemarle Street have by that accident

¹ Sir Henry Layard's *Autobiography*, I., p. 47.

² Siniles's *Life of Murray*, II., p. 182.